

Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR FR UR

SUBJECT: BREZHNEV GIVES COOL PERFORMANCE IN
PRE-POMPIDOU VISIT PRESS CONFERENCE

1. SUMMARY. BREZHNEV MARCH 10 INTERVIEW WITH FRENCH
JOURNALISTS IS NOTEWORTHY FOR FACT THAT SOVIET
LEADER MADE LITTLE EFFORT TO DOWNPLAY ISSUES ON
WHICH THERE ARE BILATERAL DIFFERENCES. INDEED, ONE
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HAS THE FEELING FROM TASS ACCOUNT IN PRAVDA MARCH 11

THAT BREZHNEV WELCOMED, PERHAPS EVEN SOUGHT, OPPORTUNITIES TO SPELL OUT AREAS OF DISAGREEMENT. EVEN THOUGH HIS SPECIFIC REMARKS ON BILATERAL RELATIONS WERE POSITIVE, OVERALL EFFECT IS THUS ONE OF SOVIET COOLNESS IN ANTICIPATION OF POMPIDOU'S ARRIVAL. END SUMMARY.

2. IN HIS SHORT PREPARED STATEMENT, BREZHNEV TOUCHED ON THREE NEURALGIC POINTS - CSCE, BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS, AND THE CONDUCT OF THE FRENCH PRESS. HE REFERRED TO CSCE AS A "VERY IMPORTANT PROBLEM," RETURNING IN THE QUESTION-AND ANSWER SESSION TO THE MAIN POINT OF BILATERAL DIVERGENCE- THE SOVIET VIEW THAT STAGE THREE SHOULD BE AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL. IN THE QUESTION-AND-ANSWER PERIOD BREZHNEV, IN EXPRESSING IMPATIENCE WITH PACE OF CSCE, ALSO NOTED THAT HE AND POMPIDOU HAD ONCE SUPPORTED CSCE CONCLUSION DURING 1972.

3. BREZHNEV IN PREPARED STATEMENT EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE MOSCOW ATTACHES TO BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS, POINTEDLY REFERRING TO HIS FOUR MEETINGS WITH POMPIDOU AND TO GROMYKO'S VISIT TO PARIS AS EVIDENCE OF SOVIET SOLICITUDE. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION ON FRENCH CONCERN ABOUT CONDOMINIUM AND LACK OF CONSULTATIONS, HE SAID HE HAD BEEN FRANK WITH POMPIDOU ON THAT ISSUE FOLLOWING HIS VISIT TO WASHINGTON AND HAD FORMED THE CONVICTION THAT POMPIDOU UNDERSTOOD HIM CORRECTLY.

4. ON THE FRENCH PRESS, BREZHNEV TOOK THE GLOVES OFF, LECTURING IT ON OBJECTIVITY AND ACCUSING IT OF DISTORTIONS IN THE SERVICE OF UNNAMED INTERESTS. BILATERAL SECTION OF HIS PREPARED STATEMENT ENDED WITH ALLUSION TO HISTORICAL UPS AND DOWNS OF STATE-TO -STATE RELATIONS (AS CONTRASTED WITH CONSTANT RESPECT AMONG PEOPLES) AND WITH PRESUMPTION THAT SOVIETS, IN THEIR POLICY OF DEEPENING BILATERAL TRUST AND RESPECT, "ARE ENTITLED TO RECIPROCITY FROM THE FRENCH SIDE." (WE NOTE THAT TASS ENGLISH VERSION SOFTENED THIS QUOTE CONSIDERABLY.)

5. SEEMS POSSIBLE THAT SOVIETS PROMPTED A QUESTION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FROM HUMANITE CORRESPONDENT ON WESTERN REFERENCE TO SOVIET UNION AS "SUPERPOWER." BREZHNEV TURNED QUESTION AGAINST CHINA (FOR COINING WORK WHEN PRC IS A SUPER-POWER HERSELF) BUT A COMPANION TARGET SEEMED TO BE FRANCE. HE PUT HIS REMARKS INTO A WESTERN CONTEXT BY RECALLING EARLIER CAMPAIGN AGAINST DOCTRINE OF "LIMITED SOVEREIGNTY" (WHICH FOLLOWED INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA). HE THEN ADDRESSED THE FRENCH NEWSMEN DIRECTLY,

SAYING, "I THINK THAT YOU, AS EXPERIENCED JOURNALISTS, UNDERSTAND THE POINT OF SUCH CAMPAIGNS." AT ANOTHER POINT HE SAID HE HAD NEVER CALLED FRANCE A SUPERPOWER.

6. SIGNIFICANT POINTS MADE BY BREZHNEV ON SUBJECTS OTHER THAN FRENCH-SOVIET RELATIONS INCLUDE FOLLOWING:

A. HE WELCOMED "WITH SATISFACTION" FRG-GDR AGREEMENT ON EXCHANGE OF PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES.

B. HE ACCEPTED REALITY OF EC NINE, BUT CITED "REPEATED" SOVIET STATEMENTS AGAINST "EXCLUSIVE GROUPINGS."

C. HE REITERATED SOVIET SUPPORT FOR IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS WITH CHINA AND SOVIET BELIEF THAT THINGS ARE NOW UP TO CHINA.

D. HE DENIED THAT THE USSR HAS TAKEN ITSELF OUT OF THE PLAY ON THE MIDDLE EAST.

7. IN ANOTHER ITEM OF INTEREST, THE TASS VERSION APPARENTLY CUT DOWN BREZHNEV'S RESPONSE TO THE FIGARO QUESTION ON SOLZHENITSYN. TASS HAS HIM SIMPLY DENYING THAT HE HAD SOLZHENITSYN IN MIND WHEN HE CRITICIZED FRENCH PRESS.
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